

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, KU, SA
SUBJECT: KUWAITI-SAUDI DISCUSSIONS ON THE PARTITIONED (NEUTRAL ZONE).

1. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL LOCAL PRESS REPORTS, KUWAITI MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FINANCE AND INTERIOR/DEFENSE ALL RECENTLY HAVE BEEN OR WILL BE INVOLVED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA AIMED AT IMPROVING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PARTITIONED (NEUTRAL) ZONE. PROBLEMS IN THIS AREA HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN EXACERBATED BY OPEC TWO-TIER PRICING LEVEL WHICH ACCENTUATES DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THINGS KUWAITI AND THINGS SAUDI AT KHAFJI. SENSITIVITIES BORN OF THE PRICE DISPUTE MAY BE SPILLING OVER INTO OTHER AREAS.

2. FINANCE MINISTER 'ATIQI TRAVELLED TO SAUDI ARABIA LAST WEEK IN WHAT PAPERS DESCRIBED AS A VISIT TO DISCUSS MATTERS RELATED TO PARTITIONED ZONE. INTERIOR/DEFENSE MINISTERS SHAYKH SA'AD ABDALLAH WILL GO TO RIYADH SATURDAY, APRIL 16 ON AN "URGENT MISSION" TO DISCUSS MATTERS WHICH, ACCORDING TO "OBSERVERS" QUOTED IN PRESS, INCLUDE THE SITUATION IN THE PARTITIONED AREA. DIFFERENCE IN THE PRICE OF CRUDE OIL HAS REPORTEDLY AGAIN "RAISED QUESTION OF THE JOINT ADMINISTRATION OF THE ZONE."

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3. PROBLEMS IN ADMINISTRATION OF PARTITIONED ZONE WERE REPORTEDLY ALSO THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF A MEETING BETWEEN SAUDI AMBASSADOR AL-SUDAYRI AND FOREIGN MINISTER SHAYKH SABAH AL-AHMAD APRIL 11. AL-QABAS REPORTS THAT THE MINISTER HAD EARLIER PRESIDED OVER A MEETING OF THE KUWAITI MEMBERS OF A JOINT KUWAITI-SAUDI STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE PARTITIONED AREA AND HAD URGED THE COMMITTEE TO

EXPEDITE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SAUDI-KUWAITI MEMO IN CONNECTION WITH PARTITIONED ZONE AFFAIRS. SPOKESMAN FOR THE COMMITTEE TOLD AL-QABAS THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF SOME OF THE "SERVICE" MINISTRIES (BELIEVE THIS MEANS POWER, WATER, HEALTH, ETC.) REPRESENTED ON THE COMMITTEE HAD BEEN TOLD TO SPEED UP THEIR MINISTRIES SUPPORT TO THE POPULATION THERE.

4. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THE PROBLEMS RELATE TO UNEVEN KUWAITI PROVISION OF SERVICES IN THE PARTITIONED (NEUTRAL) ZONE, AND PARTICULARLY AN UNHAPPY SITUATION IN KHAFJI. ALTHOUGH KUWAIT DOES BY AGREEMENT WITH SAUDI ARABIA PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE PARTITIONED ZONE, THE FARTHER SOUTH ONE GETS THE POORER THE SERVICE BECOMES. THE TWO-TIERED CRUDE OIL PRICING SETUP AND RESULTANT DIFFICULTIES FOR THE ARABIAN OIL COMPANY AT KHAFJI MAY HAVE BROUGHT SITUATION INTO SHARPER FOCUS FOR BOTH GOVERNMENTS. MAESTRONE

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